

Toward a Sunni Consensus on the Rightly Guided Caliphs: Ibn ‘Umar’s Hadith and Its  
Transmitters

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This article studies how the ‘Uthmānī position endorsing the first three caliphs, which was embraced by the majority of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* in the first two centuries of Islam, came to be replaced by the four-caliph thesis. It examines variations in the narrations of different chains of transmission of Ibn ‘Umar’s tradition in relation to the geographical affiliation and movements of the transmitters active in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. The analysis suggests that Ibn ‘Umar’s tradition was present in two versions at the turn of the ninth century, circulated in Iraqi cities and non-Iraqi cities respectively. Through its investigation, this study substantiates the current narrative on early *ahl al-ḥadīth* attitudes toward the first four caliphs and offers more insights that help explain why the ‘Uthmānī hadith narrators failed to perpetuate their ideas.

INTRODUCTION

The four-caliph thesis—the belief that the first four caliphs, in contrast to subsequent rulers, were chosen by the Prophet as rightly guided (*rāshidūn*)—was not a standard Sunni position in the first three centuries of Islam. The position taken by the majority of the early traditionist scholars (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) was the three-caliph thesis, which recognized only Abū Bakr (r. 11–13/632–634), ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–644), and ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān (r. 23–35/644–656) as the chosen successors of the Prophet Muḥammad. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib’s (r. 35–40/656–661) entanglement in the first civil war (*fiṭna*), and especially the murder of ‘Uthmān, likely put his moral rectitude and standing vis-à-vis other Companions into question, leaving the legitimacy of

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his caliphate up to debate.<sup>1</sup> According to Patricia Crone and Wilferd Madelung, in the first two centuries of Islam most Muslims were supporters of ‘Uthmān (or ‘Uthmānīs), who embraced the three-caliph idea, and were well represented in the main Muslim cities—Medina, Basra, and Baghdad—as well as in Syria.<sup>2</sup> A number of hadith scholars from that time are also identified as ‘Uthmānīs.<sup>3</sup> In the course of the ninth and tenth centuries, the *ahl al-ḥadīth* in Iraq gradually came to agree upon the concept of the four rightly guided caliphs, with ‘Alī being admitted to the rank of the caliphate of the prophethood (*khilāfat al-nubuwwa*). In light of the Abbasid program of legitimization, which subdued and eventually replaced the Umayyad narrative of their dynastic rule that, bypassing ‘Alī, links directly to ‘Uthmān,<sup>4</sup> such a transformation was brought about by scholars’ endeavors to delineate their communal identity. Madelung suggests that

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<sup>1</sup> The Muslim disagreements over the first civil war, as documented in the heresiographical works do not necessarily represent the exact questions and debates of the seventh century. Yet the poetry from the early period, although much of it is apocryphal, illustrates the divisions and partisanship of different political alignments involved. See Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn wa-ikhtilafāt al-muṣallīn*, ed. M. M. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, 2 vols. (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣriyya, 1990), 1: 47–64; T. El-Achèche, *La poésie šī‘ite des origines au IIIe siècle de l’hégire* (Damascus: Presses de l’Ifpo, 2003), 47–122; P. Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2005), 23–27.

<sup>2</sup> Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, 124–35; *EI2*, art. Imāma (W. Madelung).

<sup>3</sup> Crone mentions a number of examples in *EI2*, art. ‘Uthmāniyya.

<sup>4</sup> A. Borrut, “Vanishing Syria: Periodization and Power in Early Islam,” *Der Islam* 91 (2014): 37–68.

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) was a key actor in ushering in the four-caliph concept,<sup>5</sup> but the idea was very likely present among hadith scholars before him.<sup>6</sup> Yet overall, the historical

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<sup>5</sup> W. Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehre der Zaiditen* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1965), 223–28. Asma Afsaruddin also credits Ibn Ḥanbal, along with al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820), with the promotion of the four-caliph belief; see her *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 18.

<sup>6</sup> Several hadith scholars before Ibn Ḥanbal, including Nūḥ b. Abī Maryam (d. 173/789f.) and Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), are mentioned as having propagated the four-caliph position, although it is also claimed that the latter subscribed to the three-caliph view; Crone, ‘Uthmāniyya; see also F. Salem, *The Emergence of Early Sufi Piety and Sunni Scholasticism: ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak and the Formation of Sunnī Identity in the Second Islamic Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 24–28. Further support for circulation of the four-caliph thesis before Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is the fact that the so-called Safīna’s tradition seems to have been first disseminated in Basra, for which, see M. Q. Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early ‘Abbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 171–73; I-Wen Su, “The Early Shi‘i Kufan Traditionists’ Perspective on the Rightly Guided Caliphs,” *JAOS* 141.1: 27–47. The methods and efforts of the hadith compilers in the ninth century in transforming and elevating ‘Alī’s image are discussed by N. Husayn, “The Rehabilitation of ‘Alī in Sunnī Ḥadīth and Historiography,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 29 (2019): 565–83.

process of how the early *ahl al-ḥadīth* came to embrace the four-caliph thesis in lieu of the three-caliph thesis needs further research.<sup>7</sup>

This article will flesh out this historic transformation by examining closely the following hadith: “During the time of the Prophet, we compared none with Abū Bakr, then ‘Umar, and then ‘Uthmān; then we finished [the topic] and did not compare them [the rest of the Companions].”<sup>8</sup> Attributed to ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. ca. 73/692f.), and, in fewer cases, to Abū Hurayra (d. ca. 57/676f.), it is frequently cited in support of the three-caliph thesis.<sup>9</sup> For the sake

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<sup>7</sup> Crone suggests that the majority of Muslims realized that the four-caliph thesis could be “a compromise designed to unite as many believers as possible in a single community.” However, she restates that this process is yet to be investigated; *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, 93, 135, 219, 233 (for the quotation).

<sup>8</sup> As will be shown, there are many variants of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith. This example is taken from al-Bukhārī’s (d. 256/870) *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Abū Bakr al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, ed. ‘A. al-Zahrānī, 7 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1989), 1: 371 (under the heading, *al-sunna fī al-tafḍīl*); al-Barbahārī, *Sharḥ al-Sunna*, ed. Kh. Q. al-Radādī (Medina: Maktabat al-Ghurabā’ al-Athariyya, 1993), 75. Christopher Melchert calls for distinction between the Sunni doctrine on the caliphate (*khilāfa*) and that on the precedence (*tafḍīl*), and demonstrates convincingly that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his followers had different views on these two questions. For them, ‘Alī is the fourth rightly guided caliph but not necessarily the fourth best Companion after the first three caliphs; Christopher Melchert, *Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 94–98; idem, “The Rightly Guided Caliphs: The Range of Views Preserved in Ḥadīth,” in *Political Quietism in Islam: Sunnī and Shī‘ī Practice and*

of brevity and convenience, I will refer to it as Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith, although its namesake is not always given as its ultimate source. Rather than seeking to locate the *fons et origo* of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith by applying *isnād-cum-matn* analysis, this article investigates variations in the contents of different chains of transmission in relation to the geographical affiliation and movements of the transmitters active in the late eighth and early ninth centuries.<sup>10</sup> The temporal

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*Thought* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), 63–80, at 63. Such a distinction holds water in the case of Ibn Ḥanbal, whose views are documented by his students in detail, but it is questionable whether it existed among the traditionists before him—also the subjects of this study—given that the imamate is intrinsically entwined with the question of who the most meritorious is (Crone, *Medieval*, 66, 101, et passim).

<sup>10</sup> *Isnād-cum-matn* analysis studies the hadith’s chain of transmission (*isnād*; *matn* stands for the text) associated with a single transmitter in order to examine how likely the ascription can be established to be authentic and thus be used to reconstruct, partially or fully, the corpus of the given transmitter; see A. Görke and G. Schoeler, “Reconstructing the Earliest *sīra* Texts: The *Hiġra* in the Corpus of ‘Urwa Ibn al-Zubayr,” *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 209–20, esp. 211–13. It is used to investigate whether a certain hadith was circulated in the seventh century, without making a claim to its existence in the first Muslim generation, as is sometimes misunderstood; for example, S. J. Shoemaker, “In Search of ‘Urwa’s *Sīra*: Some Methodological Issues in the Quest for ‘Authenticity’ in the Life of Muḥammad,” *Der Islam* 85 (2011): 257–344. See in response, A. Görke, H. Motzki, and G. Schoeler, ‘First Century Sources for the Life of Muḥammad? A Debate,’ *Der Islam* 89 (2012): 2–59. As this study focuses on the transmitters active in the eighth and ninth centuries, scepticism concerning the veracity of chains in reflecting

scope for hadith transmitters before the generation of Ibn Ḥanbal has been chosen in order to revisit the current narrative on the historical transformation of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*'s attitude toward the first four caliphs.

Current scholarship outlines the development and spread of the three-caliph thesis among the *ahl al-ḥadīth* but hardly discusses 'Uthmānī hadith scholars in depth.<sup>11</sup> In its investigation of

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their sources in the seventh century bears little relevance to its analysis and conclusions, as recent studies have demonstrated that some hadith were faithfully transmitted as early as the beginning of the eighth century. For an overview of the scholarly debate on the dating of the hadith corpus, see H. Motzki, "Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey," *Arabica* 52 (2005): 204–53. Methodologically, Najam Haider and Behnam Sadeghi's works, which correlate a hadith's circulation with a geographical locale, also inspired my approach to Ibn 'Umar's hadith, but I am less concerned with regional ritual or legal practices or with the terminus post quem of the circulation of a tradition in a city; see N. Haider, "The Geography of the Isnad: Possibilities for the Reconstruction of Local Ritual Practice in the 2nd/8th Century," *Der Islam* 90 (2013): 306–46; B. Sadeghi, "The Traveling Tradition Test: A Method for Dating Traditions," *Der Islam* 85 (2009): 203–242.

<sup>11</sup> The connotation of the term 'Uthmānī varies in accordance with the context. Among the *ahl al-ḥadīth* in the eighth and ninth centuries, it may denote pro-Umayyads; those who rejected 'Alī's caliphate or did not acknowledge its legitimacy; or those who were hostile to him as a historical figure. This article is concerned with the latter two. While Crone ('Uthmāniyya) mentions a number of so-called 'Uthmānī hadith transmitters, the validity of this label being applied to the given subjects is hardly examined in detail. See also N. Husayn, *Opposing the*

the scholarly networks of the propagators of the three-caliph thesis, this article will furthermore situate the trend that elevates ‘Alī’s status before the end of the ninth century, *pace* Madelung’s argument.<sup>12</sup>

The question of why the four-caliph thesis became the mainstream discourse among early Sunnis cannot be fully addressed, yet the study of the transmission and transmitters of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith might help explain why the ‘Uthmānī hadith narrators failed to perpetuate their ideas. Hadith study is an enterprise involving much network construction and expansion. A transmitter’s inability to broaden his network limits his contact with influential teachers and students, which potentially inhibits dissemination of his ideas. Most of the ‘Uthmānī traditionists examined here were less successful in attracting students than their counterparts who promoted the four-caliph thesis. However, it should be borne in mind that Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith is not the only tradition endorsing the three-caliph thesis, although it is widely transmitted and thus suitable for an *isnad-cum-matn* analysis, compared with others.<sup>13</sup> Given that more evidence

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*Imām: The Legacy of the Nawāṣib in Islamic Literature* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2021), 15–38.

<sup>12</sup> Crone, ‘Uthmāniyya. For the hostile reports toward ‘Alī, see Husayn, “Rehabilitation of ‘Alī,” esp. 579–83.

<sup>13</sup> In one hadith supporting the first three caliphs, a man dreamed that he saw a scale descend from heaven. The Prophet and the first three caliphs were then weighed one after another before the scale ascended again. The Prophet, after hearing the details of the dream, remarked: “The caliphate of prophethood. Then, God grants kingship to whomever he wishes.” See Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, ed. U. b. I. b. Muḥammad, 15 vols. (Cairo: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadītha li-l-Ṭibā‘a

should be incorporated, the results of this study are more a call for further research than a conclusive statement.

Section I will describe the spread of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith and then thoroughly examine the ramifications of its chains in correspondence with the textual variants. The analysis suggests that Ibn ‘Umar’s tradition was present in two versions at the turn of the ninth century, circulated in Iraqi cities and non-Iraqi cities respectively. In Section II this finding will be contextualized by an examination of the Basran and Kufan scholarly milieux, with special regard to the life of Abū Mu‘āwiya (d. 195/810), an important point of convergence of the Iraqi version of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith. Finally, Section III will investigate the eighth- and ninth-century transmitters of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith who circulated meritorious (*faḍā’il*) hadith on the first three caliphs, identify the ‘Uthmānīs among them, and survey their geographical movement and interpersonal networks.

Before proceeding to Section I, a note on the sources used in the analysis of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith’s transmission is required. As the analysis below identifies specific chains of transmission in the discussion, the following monograms stand for the hadith compilers and their specific works consulted. I have tried to keep them as intuitive as possible.

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wa-l-Nashr, n.d.), 31104; Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, ed. Sh. al-Arnā’ūt and M. K. Q. Balālī, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Risāla al-‘Ālamiyya, 2009), 4635. For other three-caliph hadith, see, e.g., al-Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Ma‘rifa wa-l-tārīkh*, ed. A. Ḍ. al-‘Umarī, 4 vols. (Medina: Maktabat al-Dār, 1990), 3: 460; al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, ed. B. ‘A. Ma‘rūf, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1996), 3697, 3710; Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād, *Kitāb al-Fitan*, ed. M. M. S. al-Shūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2004), 254. Throughout the references for hadith collections indicate the numbers assigned to hadith instead of page numbers.



AD—Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *al-Sunan*<sup>14</sup>

AH—Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Faḍā'il al-ṣaḥāba*<sup>15</sup>

AY—Abū Ya'la al-Mawṣilī, *al-Musnad*<sup>16</sup>

Bukh—al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*<sup>17</sup>

Ḥār—al-Ḥārith b. Abī Usāma, *Musnad*<sup>18</sup>

IA 'Āṣim—Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *al-Sunna*<sup>19</sup>

IAShayba—Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaḥ*<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The *Sunan* edition is cited in n. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Mecca: Dār al-ʿIlm li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1983. Because of the interpolations by his son, ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad (d. 290/903), and the latter's student Abū Bakr al-Qaṭīʿī (d. 368/978f.), the structure and form of *Faḍā'il al-ṣaḥāba* cannot possibly have been penned by Ibn Ḥanbal; see G. Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, ed. J. E. Montgomery, trans. U. Vagelpohl (London: Routledge, 2006), 46; W. A. M. ʿAbbās, “al-Faṣl al-Rābiʿ,” in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā'il al-ṣaḥāba*, 41.

<sup>16</sup> Ed. Ḥ. S. Asad (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa al-ʿArabiyya, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> Ed. M. al-Khaṭīb and M. F. ʿAbd al-Bāqī, 4 vols. (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Salafiyya, 1980).

<sup>18</sup> Al-Ḥārith's *Musnad* was reconstructed by Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī (d. 807/1404f.):

*Bughyat al-bāḥith ʿan zawā'id Musnad al-Ḥārith*, ed. Ḥ. A. H. al-Bākīrī (Medina: Markaz Khidmat al-Sunna wa-l-Sīra al-Nabawiyya, 1992).

<sup>19</sup> Ed. M. N. al-Albānī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1980).

<sup>20</sup> The edition is cited in n. 13.

#### I. IBN ‘UMAR’S TRADITION AND ITS DISSEMINATION

Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith was purportedly narrated from Ibn ‘Umar to five transmitters: Abū Ṣāliḥ (d. 101/719f.), Nāfi‘ (d. ca. 117/735f.), Sālim b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar (d. 106/725), Ya‘qūb b. Dīnār al-Mājishūn (died in the 120s/737–747), and Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (d. 110/729). In two instances (IA ‘Āṣim 1197 and Ḥār 959), the ultimate source of the hadith is identified as Abū Hurayra, who is alleged to have transmitted it to Abū Ṣāliḥ, who then transmitted to Suhayl (died during the caliphate of al-Manṣūr, 136–158/754–775). Along with the two of Abū Hurayra, the narrations (*riwāyāt*; sg. *riwāya*) derived from Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (AH 61) and al-Mājishūn (AY 5602) are single strands (“dives”) whose authenticity and origins cannot be known for certain. However, after establishing the geographical connections of the two versions of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith, it is possible to posit their provenance. The narrations from Abū Ṣāliḥ, Nāfi‘, and Sālim b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar constitute separate bundles of chains,<sup>22</sup> as represented respectively in Figs. 1–3. The details of each *riwāya* (*matn*, *isnād*, and its transmitters’ geographical connections) found in each bundle are provided after each figure, followed by an analysis.

Fig. 1. Abū Ṣāliḥ’s Bundle

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<sup>21</sup> The edition is cited in n. 13.

<sup>22</sup> A bundle is made up by a number of chains of transmission that share two or more transmitters in common; G. H. A. Juynboll, “Nāfi‘, the *Mawlā* of Ibn ‘Umar, and His Position in Muslim *Ḥadīth* Literature,” *Der Islam* 70 (1993): 207–44, at 209.

**IA ʿĀṣim 1196—Homs**

Abū Ṣāliḥ [Medina; Kufa]—Suhayl [Medina]—Ismāʿīl b. ʿAyyāsh (d. ca. 181/797f.)

[Homs]—ʿAbd al-Waḥḥāb b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk al-Ḥimṣī [Homs]:

*Kunnā nataḥaddathu ʿalā ʿahd rasūl Allāh inna khayr ḥādhihi al-umma baʿd nabiyyihā*

*Abū Bakr wa-ʿUmar wa-ʿUthmān fa-yablughu dhālik al-nabī fa-lā yunkiruhu ʿalaynā.*

**AH 58—Kufa**

Abū Ṣāliḥ—Suhayl—Abū Muʿāwiya [Kufa]:

*Kunnā naʿuddu wa-rasūl Allāh ḥayy wa-aṣḥābuhu mutawāfirūn Abū Bakr wa-ʿUmar wa-*

*ʿUthmān thumma naskutu.*

**AY 5784—Kufa**

Abū Ṣāliḥ—Suhayl—Abū Muʿāwiya—Zuhayr b. Ḥarb (d. 234/849) [Baghdad]:

*Kunnā naʿuddu wa-rasūl Allāh ḥayy wa-aṣḥābuhu mutawāfirūn Abū Bakr wa-ʿUmar wa-*

*ʿUthmān thumma naskutu.*

**IAShayba 32534—Kufa**

Abū Ṣāliḥ—Suhayl—Abū Muʿāwiya:

*Kunnā naʿuddu wa-rasūl Allāh ḥayy wa-aṣḥābuhu mutawāfirūn Abū Bakr wa-ʿUmar wa-*

*ʿUthmān thumma naskutu.*

**IA ʿĀṣim 1195—Kufa**

Abū Ṣāliḥ—Suhayl—Abū Muʿāwiya—Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba (d. 235/849) [Kufa]:

*Kunnā naʿuddu wa-rasūl Allāh ḥayy Abū Bakr wa-ʿUmar wa-ʿUthmān thumma naskutu.*

Abū Ṣāliḥ's bundle, originally derived from Medina, splits into two subsets after Suhayl:<sup>23</sup> a Syrian subset (IA 'Āṣim 1196) passing through Ismā'īl b. 'Ayyāsh and 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk;<sup>24</sup> and an Iraqi one, featuring Abū Mu'āwiya as the point of convergence of the subsequent Kufan and Baghdadi transmitters (AH 58, IAShayba 32534, IA 'Āṣim 1195, and AY 5784).<sup>25</sup> The Syrian subset (IA 'Āṣim 1196) states: "We said, during the time of the Messenger of God, that the best of this community after its Prophet is Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān. That reached the Prophet and he did not reprove us for that." Its wording accentuates the status of the first three caliphs as being above that of the other Companions, a striking

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<sup>23</sup> Both Abū Ṣāliḥ and his son Suhayl lived in Medina, although as an oil merchant the former traveled to Kufa; see Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. 'A. M. 'Umar, 11 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2001), 7: 296–97 and 521 respectively.

<sup>24</sup> Ismā'īl b. 'Ayyāsh was based in Homs, but traveled to Kufa and Baghdad; see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh madīnat al-salām*, ed. B. 'A. Ma'rūf, 17 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2001), 7: 186–87. It is noteworthy that Ismā'īl b. 'Ayyāsh had a poor reputation due to his unreliable transmission of hadith from Iraqis and Medinans, including Suhayl b. Abī Ṣāliḥ; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-l-ta'dīl*, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1953), 2: 191; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 7: 192–194. 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk was a storyteller (*qāṣṣ*) of Salamiyya, based in Homs; see Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 6: 74; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb al-Majrūhīn min al-muḥaddithīn*, ed. Ḥ. 'A. al-Salafī, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumay'ī, 2000), 2: 131.

<sup>25</sup> For Abū Mu'āwiya, see §II below.

contrast to that of the Iraqi subset. Transmitted to the Kufans and Baghdadis,<sup>26</sup> the texts of Abū Mu‘āwiya’s subset display a remarkable similarity in terms of verb choice and syntactic structure.<sup>27</sup> But instead of singling out the “best” Companions, the traditions from this subset use a more ambiguous verb, *‘adda*, e.g., AH 58: “We enumerated, while the Messenger of God was alive and his Companions were numerous, Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān, and then we fell silent.” All traditions in Abū Mu‘āwiya’s subset are similar in wording, with only one minor difference in IA ‘Āsim 1195—even a grammatical error was replicated in all but IAShayba 32534, where Abū Bakr is properly inflected in the accusative: Abā Bakr. The bifurcation of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith into two versions, Iraqi and non-Iraqi, can be verified by analyses of the other two bundles.

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<sup>26</sup> Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and Abū Khaytham Zuhayr b. Ḥarb both settled in Baghdad, although the latter originally came from Nasa. For Ibn Ḥanbal, see *EL2*, art. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (H. Laoust); for Ibn Ḥarb, see Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 357; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb al-Thiqāt*, ed. M. ‘A. Khān, 10 vols. (Hyderabad: Maṭba‘at Majlis Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, 1973), 8: 256–57. Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba was a Kufan, but he traveled to the Hijaz, Basra, and Baghdad; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 11: 261; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 8: 538; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, ed. Ḥ. ‘Abd al-Mannān (Beirut: Bayt al-Afkār al-Dawliyya, 2004), 2488.

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that the same verb is used in AH 401, from Nāfi‘’s bundle and also transmitted on Abū Mu‘āwiya’s authority; see below.

Fig. 2. Nāfi's Bundle

**AH 401**—Kufa

Nāfi' [Medina]—Muḥammad b. Sūqa [Kufa; Mecca]—Abū Mu'āwiya—Abū Ḥafṣ  
Mu'āwiya b. Ḥafṣ al-Sha'bī [Kufa; Aleppo]—Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥimṣī [Homs]:  
*Kunnā na 'uddu 'alā 'ahd rasūl Allāh Abū Bakr wa- 'Umar wa- 'Uthmān thumma naskutu.*

**IA 'Āṣim 1193**—Egypt/Homs

Nāfi'—Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb (d. 128/745f.) [Egypt]—al-Layth b. Sa'd (d. 165/782)  
[Egypt]—Baqiyya b. al-Walīd (d. 197/812f.) [Homs]—'Amr b. 'Uthmān (d. 250/864f.)  
[Homs]:  
*Kunnā nataḥaddathu 'alā 'ahd rasūl Allāh annahu khayr hādhihi al-umma ba'd  
nabiyyihā Abū Bakr thumma 'Umar thumma 'Uthmān fa-yablughu dhālik al-nabī fa-lā  
yunkiruhu.*

**AH 63**—Medina/Damascus

Nāfi'—'Abdallāh b. 'Umar al-'Umarī (d. ca. 171/787f.) [Medina]—Marwān b.  
Muḥammad al-Ṭāṭarī (d. 210/825f.) [Damascus]—Salama b. Shabīb (d. ca. 247/861)  
[Mecca]:  
*Mā kunnā nakhtalifu fī 'ahd rasūl Allāh anna al-khalīfa ba'd rasūl Allāh Abū Bakr wa-  
anna al-khalīfa ba'd Abī Bakr 'Umar wa-anna al-khalīfa ba'd 'Umar 'Uthmān.*

**AH 57**—Medina/Homs

Nāfi'—Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Anṣārī (d. 143/760f.) [Medina]—Ismā'īl b. 'Ayyāsh—al-  
Ḥakam b. Mūsā (d. 232/847) [Baghdad]:  
*Kunnā nataḥaddathu 'alā 'ahd rasūl Allāh inna khayr hādhihi al-umma ba'd nabiyyihā  
Abū Bakr wa- 'Umar wa- 'Uthmān.*

**AH 53**—Medina/Damascus

Nāfi'—Yahyā b. Sa'īd al-Anṣārī—Sulaymān b. Bilāl (d. ca. 172/788f.) [Medina]—

Marwān b. Muḥammad al-Ṭāṭarī—Salama b. Shabīb:

*Kunnā nufaḍḍilu 'alā 'ahd rasūl Allāh Abā Bakr wa- 'Umar wa- 'Uthmān thumma lā nufaḍḍilu aḥadan 'alā aḥad.*

**Bukh 3655**—Medina

Nāfi'—Yahyā b. Sa'īd al-Anṣārī—Sulaymān b. Bilāl—'Abd al-'Azīz b. 'Abdallāh al-Uwaysī [Medina]:

*Kunnā nukhayyiru bayna al-nās fī zaman al-nabī fa-nukhayyiru Abā Bakr thumma 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb thumma 'Uthmān b. 'Affān.*

**IA 'Āṣim 1192**—Medina/Damascus; Egypt

Nāfi'—Yahyā b. Sa'īd al-Anṣārī—Sulaymān b. Bilāl—Yahyā b. Ḥassān (d. ca. 208/823) [Damascus; Egypt]—Muḥammad b. Miskīn (died between 241 and 250/855 and 864) [Baghdad]:

*Kunnā nukhayyiru bayna al-nās fī zamān al-nabī fa-nukhayyiru Abā Bakr thumma 'Umar thumma 'Uthmān.*

**AH 62**—Damascus

Nāfi'—Jasur b. al-Ḥasan [Iraq; Syria]—al-Awzā'ī (d. ca. 157/774) [Damascus; Beirut]—al-Walīd b. Muslim (d. 194/810) [Damascus]—al-Walīd b. Shujā' b. al-Walīd (d. ca. 242/856f.) [Baghdad]:

*Kunnā nufaḍḍilu 'alā 'ahd rasūl Allāh Abā Bakr wa- 'Umar wa- 'Uthmān thumma lā nufaḍḍilu aḥadan 'alā aḥad.*

**IA 'Āṣim 1194**—Damascus

Nāfi‘ —Jasur b. al-Ḥasan—al-Awzā‘ī—al-Walīd b. Muslim—Hishām b. ‘Ammār (d. 245/859) [Damascus]:

*Kunnā nufaḍḍilu ‘alā ‘ahd rasūl Allāh Abā Bakr wa- ‘Umar wa- ‘Uthmān thumma lā nufaḍḍilu aḥadan ‘alā aḥad.*

**AH 54**—Medina

Nāfi‘ —‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar (d. 147/764f.) [Medina]—‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abdallāh b. Abī Salama al-Mājishūn (d. ca. 164/780–1f.) [Medina; Baghdad]—Manṣūr b. Salama (d. 210/825f.) [Baghdad]:

*Kunnā fī zamān al-nabī lā na ‘dilu ba ‘d al-nabī bi-Abī Bakr thumma ‘Umar thumma ‘Uthmān thumma natruku wa-lā nufaḍḍilu baynahum.*

**Bukh 3698**—Medina

Nāfi‘ —‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar—‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abdallāh b. Abī Salama al-Mājishūn—Shādhān (d. 208/823f.) [Syria; Baghdad]—Muḥammad b. Ḥātim b. Bazī‘ (d. 249/863) [Baghdad]:

*Kunnā fī zaman al-nabī lā na ‘dilu bi-Abī Bakr aḥadan thumma ‘Umar thumma ‘Uthmān thumma natruku wa-lā nufaḍḍilu baynahum.*

**AD 4627**—Medina

Nāfi‘ —‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar—‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abdallāh b. Abī Salama al-Mājishūn—Shādhān—‘Uthmān b. Abī Shayba (d. 239/853) [Kufa; Baghdad]:

*Kunnā fī zaman al-nabī lā na ‘dilu bi-Abī Bakr aḥadan thumma ‘Umar thumma ‘Uthmān thumma natruku wa-lā nufaḍḍilu baynahum.*

**Tir 3707**—Basra



Nāfi' — 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Umar—al-Ḥārith b. 'Umayr [Basra]—al-'Alā' b. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-'Aṭṭār [Basra]—Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Dawraqī (d. 246/860) [Baghdad]:

*Kunnā naqūlu wa-rasūl Allāh ḥayy Abū Bakr wa-'Umar wa-'Uthmān.*

**AH 55—Basra**

Nāfi' — 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Umar—al-Ḥārith b. 'Umayr—al-'Alā' b. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-'Aṭṭār—Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Dawraqī:

*Kunnā naqūlu wa-rasūl Allāh ḥayy Abū Bakr wa-'Umar wa-'Uthmān.*

We can classify the narrations in Nāfi' 's bundle into Iraqi and non-Iraqi ones. The former consist of AH 401, AH 55, and Tir 3707. AH 401 is narrated from Nāfi' to Muḥammad b. Sūqa before reaching Abū Mu'āwiya,<sup>28</sup> but it shares a common feature of other narrations derived by Abū Mu'āwiya in Abū Ṣāliḥ 's bundle in its word choice of *na'uddu*. The two others, narrated by 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Umar al-'Umarī after Nāfi', were passed down by Basrans before arriving at their shared transmitter, Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Dawraqī.<sup>29</sup> Their texts are identical, both ambiguously listing the first three caliphs without comparing them with other Companions.

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<sup>28</sup> Muḥammad b. Sūqa was Kufan and later settled in Mecca (Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 8: 459; al-'Ijlī, *Tārīkh al-thiqāt*, ed. 'A. Qal'ajī [Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1984], 405), while Mu'āwiya b. Ḥafṣ al-Sha'bī was Kufan and later moved to Aleppo (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 8: 387). I cannot identify Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥimṣī, but, as the *nisba* indicates, he is connected with Homs.

<sup>29</sup> For al-Dawraqī, see al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 5: 9–11. For the Basrans before him, see §II below.

Although also tracing back to ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar al-‘Umarī, AH 54, Bukh 3698, and AD 4627 betray their Medinan/Syrian sentiment with their verb choice of *‘adala* (to equal) and their emphasis that comparison ceases after the first three caliphs have been ranked.<sup>30</sup>

Another subset of Nāfi‘’s bundle is Syria-affiliated (AH 62 and IA‘ Āṣim 1194), starting with Jasur b. al-Ḥasan, a Kufan or Basran who moved to Syria.<sup>31</sup> Subsequently, this subset was circulated by Syrians.<sup>32</sup> In accordance with the Syrian narrations, both traditions, almost identical

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<sup>30</sup> ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Abī Salama was a member of the Mājishūn family, originally from Medina and later settled in Baghdad; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 593. Regarding the narrators in AH 54, Manṣūr b. Salama is a Baghdadi, but he moved to Missis, where he passed away (Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 348); in Bukh 3698 and AD 4627, Aswad b. ‘Āmir, known as Shādhān, was a Syrian by origin but settled in Baghdad (Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 338; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 7: 495–98), Muḥammad b. Ḥātim b. Bazī‘ was a Baghdadi (Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 9: 108), and ‘Uthmān b. Abī Shayba, a Kufan, traveled widely to Rayy and Mecca before settling in Baghdad (al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 13: 162; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 8: 537; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmā’ al-rijāl*, ed. B. ‘A. Ma‘rūf, 35 vols. [Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1987], 19: 479).

<sup>31</sup> Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 2: 538; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 4: 556–58.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Awzā‘ī was based in Damascus before moving to Beirut; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 494; see also *EI2*, art. al-Awzā‘ī (J. Schacht). Both al-Walīd b. Muslim and Hishām b. ‘Ammār were Damascene. For the former, Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 475; for the latter, Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 478; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 9: 66–67. His death date is found in al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 4094. Al-Walīd b. Shujā‘ was a Baghdadi of Kufan origin, but lived in Syria for some time before returning to Baghdad (Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 366; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 15: 617).

in wording, also underscore the superiority of the first three caliphs through the verb *faḍḍala* or *fāḍala* (‘to prefer or to regard as more virtuous’; ‘to compare in terms of virtues’).

Another *isnād* in Nāfi‘’s bundle, IA ‘Āṣim 1193, was affiliated with Egypt before it was passed on to the Syrian transmitters Baqiyya b. al-Walīd and ‘Amr b. ‘Uthmān.<sup>33</sup> The *matn* of the hadith conforms to the traits of non-Iraqi narrations.

Another isolated *riwāya* in Nāfi‘’s bundle is AH 63. It was narrated from Nāfi‘ to ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar, ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar’s brother.<sup>34</sup> The wording (*lafẓ*) of this hadith is quite distinctive. Instead of comparing or listing the “best” Companions, AH 63 straightforwardly announces that Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān, one after another, were recognized as caliphs after the Prophet as an established fact. The diction used in this hadith and the choice of the word *khalīfa* is not seen in other narrations of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith. It is hard to ascertain who is responsible for this unique variation; AH 53, which shares the last two informants, bears little resemblance to in terms of wording. Overall, AH 63 was circulated among non-Iraqis.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> For Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb (Yazīd b. Abī Khabīb in Ḥār 960), see Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 520.

For al-Layth b. Sa‘d, see §III below.

<sup>34</sup> He was also based in Medina (Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 532). Marwān b. Muḥammad al-Ṭāṭarī was Damascene (Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 9: 179). Salama b. Shabīb, originally from Nishapur, settled in Mecca; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 8: 287.

<sup>35</sup> It is noteworthy that ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar al-‘Umarī took part in the revolt of Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. After the revolt was crushed, ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar was immured by al-Manṣūr but later pardoned; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 532. It is not implausible that he spread this narration (AH 63) as a sign of reconciliation with the Abbasids, who had already drifted

Finally, the last subset in Nāfi‘’s bundle diverges after Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd al-Anṣārī<sup>36</sup> into Syrian and Medinan narrations, but the categorization is by no means clear-cut, since the Syrian chains of transmission often include narrators based in Medina or Baghdad (e.g., AH 57,<sup>37</sup> IA ‘Āṣim 1192,<sup>38</sup> and AH 53). The geographical connection of the last hadith, Bukh 3655, is easier to define, as it is only transmitted by Medinans before reaching al-Bukhārī.<sup>39</sup> Overall, the transmissions derived from Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd are non-Iraqi and conform to the characteristics I have identified in terms of diction and tenor.

### Fig. 3. Sālim b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar’s Bundle

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away from the proto-Shi‘ite origins of their movement; see Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 33–70; D. G. Tor, “God’s Cleric: Al-Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ and the Transition from Caliphal to Prophetic Sunna,” in *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone*, ed. B. Sadeghi et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 195–228, at 199–204, esp. 200 n. 21. I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting this explanation.

<sup>36</sup> He was the *qāḍī* of Medina before transferring to the judgeship of Hāshimiyya during al-Manṣūr’s caliphate; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 517–18.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Ḥakam b. Mūsā, from Nasa, settled and died in Baghdad (Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 349; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 3: 128).

<sup>38</sup> For these narrators, see §III below.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abdallāh al-Uwaysī was Medinan; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 8: 396; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 617.

**IA ʿĀṣim 1191—Medina**

Sālim b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar [Medina]—al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) [Medina]—  
Muḥammad b. Abī ʿAtīq [Medina]—Sulaymān b. Bilāl—Abū Bakr b. Abī Uways  
(d. 202/817f.) [Medina]—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Uways (d. 226/840f.) [Medina]—  
ʿAbdallāh b. Shabīb [Mecca; Basra]:  
*Kunnā nataḥaddathu wa-rasūl Allāh ḥayy inna aḥḍal umma baʿdahu Abū Bakr  
thumma ʿUmar thumma ʿUthmān.*

**Ḥār 960—Egypt**

Sālim b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar—al-Zuhrī—Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb—al-Layth b.  
Saʿd—Abū al-Naḍr Hāshim b. al-Qāsim (d. 207/823) [Baghdad]:  
*Kunnā nufāḍilu bayna aṣḥāb rasūl Allāh ʿalā ʿaḥd rasūl Allāh fa-naqūlu idhā  
dhahaba Abū Bakr wa-ʿUmar wa-ʿUthmān istawā al-nās fa-yasmaʿu dhālika al-  
nabī fa-lā yunkiruhu ʿalaynā.*

**AD 4628—Kufa/Ayla**

Sālim b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar—al-Zuhrī—Yūnus b. Bukayr (d. 199/814f.)  
[Kufa]—ʿAnbasa b. Khālīd (d. 197/812f.) [Ayla]—Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī (d.  
248/862) [Egypt]:  
*Kunnā naqūlu wa-rasūl Allāh ḥayy aḥḍal ummat al-nabī baʿdahu Abū Bakr  
thumma ʿUmar thumma ʿUthmān raḍiya Allāh ʿanhum.*

**IA ʿĀṣim 1190—Homs**

Sālim b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar—al-Zuhrī—Shuʿayb b. Abī Ḥamza (d. ca.  
162/778f.) [Homs]—Bishr b. Shuʿayb (d. ca. 213/828f.) [Homs]—ʿAmr b.  
ʿUthmān:

*Afḍal ummat rasūl Allāh ba‘dahu Abū Bakr thumma ‘Umar thumma ‘Uthmān.*

**AH 857**—Homs

Sālim b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar—al-Zuhrī—Shu‘ayb b. Abī Ḥamza—Bishr b.

Shu‘ayb—Yazīd b. Qurra [?]<sup>1</sup>—‘Abdallāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥarrānī (d. 295/908)

[Baghdad]:

*Kunnā nataḥaddathu ‘alā ‘ahd rasūl Allāh anna khayr hādhihi al-umma ba‘d  
nabiyyihā Abū Bakr thumma ‘Umar thumma ‘Uthmān fa-yablughu dhālik al-nabī  
fa-lā yunkiruhu.*

**AH 56**—Homs

Sālim b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar—al-Zuhrī—Shu‘ayb b. Abī Ḥamza—Bishr b.

Shu‘ayb:

*Innā qad kunnā naqūlu wa-rasūl Allāh ḥayy afḍal ummat rasūl Allāh ba‘dahu  
Abū Bakr thumma ‘Umar thumma ‘Uthmān.*

**AH 64**—Homs

Sālim b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar—al-Zuhrī—Shu‘ayb b. Abī Ḥamza—Bishr b.

Shu‘ayb:

*‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar qāla: jā’anī rajul min al-Anṣār fī khilāfat ‘Uthmān fa-  
kallamanī fa-idhā huwa ya’murunī fī kalāmihi bi-an a’iba ‘alā ‘Uthmān fa-  
takallama kalāman ṭawīlan wa-huwa imru’ fī lisānihi thaql fa-lam yakad yaqḍī  
kalāmahu fī sarīḥ qāla fa-lammā qaḍā kalāmahu qultu lahu: **innā kunnā naqūlu  
wa-rasūl Allāh ḥayy: afḍal ummat rasūl Allāh ba‘dahu Abū Bakr thumma  
‘Umar thumma ‘Uthmān** wa-innā wa-Allāh mā na’lamu ‘Uthmān qatala nafsān  
bi-ghayr ḥaqq wa-lā jā’a min al-kabā’ir shay’an wa-lākin huwa hādihā al-māl fa-*

*in a 'tākumūhu raḍītum wa-in a 'tāhu ūlī qarābatihī sakhiṭtum innamā turīdūn an takūnū ka-Fārs wa-al-Rūm lā yatrūkūna lahum amīran illā qatalūhu.*

**AH 392**—Basra

Sālim b. 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar—al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad (d. 108/726f.) [Medina]—  
Qurra b. Khālīd (d. 154/770f.) [Basra]—'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī (d. 198/814)  
[Basra]—Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Rifā'ī (d. 248/862) [Kufa; Basra]:

*Annahu [that is, Ibn 'Umar]<sup>40</sup> qāla hīna ḥuṣira 'Uthmān inna rasūl Allāh qubiḍa fa-naẓara al-muslimūn khayrahum fa-stakhlafūhu wa-huwa Abū Bakr fa-lammā qubiḍa Abū Bakr naẓara al-muslimūn khayrahum fa-stakhlafūhu wa-huwa 'Umar fa-lammā qubiḍa 'Umar naẓara al-muslimūn khayrahum fa-stakhlafūhu wa-huwa 'Uthmān fa-in qataltumūhu fa-hātū khayran minhu.*

The bundle of Sālim b. 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar is split into five subsets: four diverging after Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī and an isolated instance (AH 392).<sup>41</sup> These four narrations after al-Zuhrī consist of an Egyptian one, starting with Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb (Hār 960); Syrian ones featuring Shu'ayb b. Abī Ḥamza (AH 56, AH 64, AH 857, and IA 'Āṣim 1190); a Medinan one with Muḥammad b. Abī 'Atīq (IA 'Āṣim 1191); and one involving transmitters active in different regions (AD 4628).

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<sup>40</sup> Text in brackets added by the author.

<sup>41</sup> Both Sālim b. 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar and al-Zuhrī were Medinans, but al-Zuhrī lived some time in Damascus; for the former, see Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 194–99. As for the latter, see Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 429–39; *EI2*, art. al-Zuhrī (M. Lecker).

Ḥār 960 passes through two Egyptians, Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb and al-Layth b. Sa‘d, before reaching Baghdad.<sup>42</sup> Its *matn* highlights the virtues of the first three caliphs in comparative terms with the phrase *kunnā nufāḍilu bayna aṣḥāb rasūl Allāh*, and then leaves the rest of the Companions equal as to their virtues.

Another subset in Sālim’s bundle is affiliated with Homs and also illustrates the first three caliphs’ status with the phrase *afḍal ummat rasūl Allāh* in AH 56, AH 64, and IA‘Āṣim 1190, or *khayr hādhihi al-umma* in AH 857.<sup>43</sup> Except for AH 64, the gist of these four traditions is very similar. AH 64 clarifies the context in which Ibn ‘Umar evaluated the first three caliphs with his defense of ‘Uthmān’s rectitude, missing from AH 56. It is impossible to know, in spite of their shared chain of transmission, who is responsible for the difference. As AH 56 replicates Ibn ‘Umar’s assessment of the Companions almost verbatim (see bold text), it can be argued that it is an abridged version of AH 64, which was not the only hadith circulating in Syria with unusual variations (see AH 63 in Nāfi’s bundle above).

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<sup>42</sup> Abū al-Naḍr Hāshim b. al-Qāsim, Khurasani by origin, was based in Baghdad; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 337.

<sup>43</sup> For Shu‘ayb b. Abī Ḥamza, see Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 473; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 6: 438.

For his son, Bishr, see §III below. I could not find any information about Yazīd b. Qurra here.

‘Abdallāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥarrānī, a *mawlā* of the Banū Umayya based in Baghdad, was distantly related to al-Awzā‘ī; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 11: 94–97; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 8: 369.



Another tradition in Sālim's bundle, IA 'Āṣim 1191, predominantly narrated by Medinans, displays the characteristics found in non-Iraqi narrations with its use of the superlative *afḍal* to accentuate the superiority of the first three caliphs.<sup>44</sup>

A more complicated case in Sālim's bundle is AD 4628. After al-Zuhrī, the hadith passes through Yūnus b. Bukayr, a Kufan transmitter,<sup>45</sup> then to 'Anbasa b. Khālīd, based in Ayla,<sup>46</sup> before reaching the Egyptian Aḥmad b. Šāliḥ.<sup>47</sup> Given its travel history, it is hard to link this *isnād* to a specific locale, but judging from the *matn* and its final destination, it may be argued that AD 4628 pertains to the non-Iraqi version of Ibn 'Umar's hadith.

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<sup>44</sup> All but the last transmitter in IA 'Āṣim 1191 were Medinans. Muḥammad b. Abī 'Atīq is likely to have been based in Medīna, where his sources lived: Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 7: 364; al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, ed. al-N. Hāshim, 9 vols. (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, n.d.), 1: 128. Abū Bakr b. Abī Uways was based in Medīna; Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 616; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 8: 398. For Ismā'īl b. Abī Uways, see Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 8: 99. 'Abdallāh b. Shabīb was a Meccan settled in Basra; see Ibn 'Adī, *al-Kāmil fī ḍu'afā' al-rijāl*, ed. 'Ā. A. 'Abd al-Mawjūd and 'A. M. Mu'awwad, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1997), 5: 430.

<sup>45</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 8: 522. See also J. van Ess, *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra: A History of Religious Thought in Early Islam*, vol. 1, trans. J. O'Kane (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 251.

<sup>46</sup> Ibn Ḥibbān, *Thiqāt*, 8: 515. Ayla was a town in Palestine.

<sup>47</sup> Categorized here as an Egyptian, he seems to have traveled to Antioch and Damascus; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 2: 56.

The last subset in Sālim's bundle is AH 392, which is distinct from other chains in that it is Basran in circulation.<sup>48</sup> The content of the hadith sets the context to the time 'Uthmān's house was besieged, with Ibn 'Umar condemning the rebels and saying:

When the Prophet passed away, Muslims looked for the best of them to be his successor, and that was Abū Bakr. When Abū Bakr passed away, they looked for the best of them to be his successor, and that was 'Umar. When 'Umar passed away, they looked for the best of them to be his successor, and that was 'Uthmān. If you kill him, bring out one who is better than he!

The dramatic setting with an underlying apologia for 'Uthmān and disapproval of his murder seems to present AH 392 as an anomaly when compared to the Iraqi version of Ibn 'Umar's hadith. Although this tradition does single out the superior places of the first three caliphs, it is not incompatible with the four-caliph thesis, as, unlike other non-Iraqi narrations, it does not place 'Alī on equal ground with the other Companions. In this sense, it departs from the non-Iraqi version by virtue of its potential inclusiveness. It may be suggested that AH 392 represents one of the earliest versions of this hadith advocating the three-caliph thesis, as it is not attributed to the Prophet but to Ibn 'Umar during 'Uthmān's caliphate.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad was Medinan; al-'Ijlī, *al-Thiqāt*, 387; Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 186–93. For Qurra b. Khālīd, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī, and Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Rifā'ī, see §§II and III.

<sup>49</sup> I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for bringing this interesting observation to my attention.

With the exception of AD 4628, which cannot be pinned to a specific locality, the analysis of the narrations in Sālim's bundle conforms to the observation derived from our study of Abū Šāliḥ and Nāfi's bundles: the divergence of the wording and meaning of the hadith is related to the locales of their circulation in the second half of the eighth century. The traditions with Iraqī chains of transmission are subtler about contrasting the first three caliphs with the others, whereas the transmitters of the non-Iraqī traditions have no qualms in doing so explicitly.

With the geographical bifurcation of Ibn 'Umar's hadith now established, we can revisit the four single strands left aside earlier—two from Ibn 'Umar (AH 61 and AY 5602) and two from Abū Hurayra (IA 'Āṣim 1197 and Ḥār 959):

#### **AY 5602—Medina**

Ibn 'Umar—al-Mājishūn (d. ca. 120–9/737–47) [Medina]—Ibn al-Mājishūn Yūsuf (d. 185/801f.) [Medina]—Abū Ma'mar Ismā'īl b. Ibrāhīm (d. 236/850) [Baghdad]:  
*Kāna rasūl Allāh wa-lā na'dilu bihi aḥadan thumma naqūlu khayr al-nās Abū Bakr thumma 'Umar thumma 'Uthmān thumma lā nufāḍilu.*

#### **AH 61—Basra**

Ibn 'Umar—Muḥammad b. Sīrīn [Basra]—al-Ḥasan b. Dīnār [Basra]—Shaybān b. Abī Shayba al-Ubullī (d. ca. 236/850f.) [Basra or Ayla]:  
*Kunnā naqūl idhā 'adadnā aṣḥāb rasūl Allāh qulnā Abū Bakr wa-'Umar wa-'Uthmān.*

#### **IA 'Āṣim 1197—Homs**

Abū Hurayra—Abū Šāliḥ—Suhayl—Ismā'īl b. 'Ayyāsh—'Abd al-Wahhāb b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk al-Ḥimṣī:

*Kunnā nataḥaddathu ‘alā ‘ahd rasūl Allāh inna khayr hādhihi al-umma ba‘d nabiyyihā  
Abū Bakr wa-‘Umar wa-‘Uthmān thumma naskutu.*

**Ḥār 959**—Basra/Mecca

Abū Hurayra—Abū Šālih—Suhayl—‘Umar b. ‘Ubayd al-Khazzāz [Basra; Mecca]—Abū  
‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Muqri’ (d. ca. 213/828) [Basra; Mecca]:

*Kunnā ma‘shar aṣḥāb rasūl Allāh wa-naḥnu mutawāfirūn naqūlu: aḍḍal hādhihi al-  
umma ba‘d nabiyyihā Abū Bakr thumma ‘Umar thumma ‘Uthmān thumma naskutu.*

An examination of the transmitters after Ibn ‘Umar suggests that the *isnād* of AY 5602 is Medinan, while that of AH 61 is predominantly Basran. AY 5602 travels through the father and son of the Mājishūn family<sup>50</sup> before being received by Abū Ma‘mar Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm.<sup>51</sup> That is, AY 5602 was narrated by the Medinans in the eighth century and its gist dovetails the traits of non-Iraqi narrations. AH 61 was first purportedly transmitted to Muḥammad b. Sīrīn, who was based in Basra.<sup>52</sup> The narrator after him, al-Ḥasan b. Dīnār, was a Basran hadith narrator of poor

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<sup>50</sup> For their Medinan affiliations, see Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 427, 593 respectively.

<sup>51</sup> Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm, an adherent of the sunna (*ṣāḥib sunna*), originally from Harat, settled in Baghdad; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 362.

<sup>52</sup> Muḥammad b. Sīrīn was the client (*mawlā*) of Anas b. Mālik, but he studied under Kufans and later settled in Basra. As he narrated from many Companions based in Kufa and Medina, he can be seen as a link between Medina and Iraq; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 192, 196. For the affinity of Basra to Medina in legal and ritual opinions, see Haider, “Geography of the Isnad,” 327.

reputation.<sup>53</sup> Finally, the hadith reached Shaybān b. Abī Shayba (d. 236/850f.), who was well connected with the Basrans.<sup>54</sup> Hence, AH 61 can be viewed as a tradition circulated among Basrans. Its *matn* features the ambiguity found in the Iraqi version of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith, with the subtler comparison of the first three caliphs, and none is explicitly singled out as “the best” or “better.”

IA ‘Āṣim 1197 and IA ‘Āṣim 1196 (in Abū Ṣāliḥ’s bundle) share the same chain of transmission, except in the ultimate source. The texts of these two narrations are also nearly identical; IA ‘Āṣim 1196 reads: “We said, during the time of the Messenger of God, that the best of this community after its Prophet is Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān. That reached the Prophet and he did not reprove us for that.” The final line is not found in IA ‘Āṣim 1197, which instead ends with “Then we would fall silent.” It can be therefore posited that IA ‘Āṣim 1197 belongs to the non-Iraqi category.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 279. Placed by Ibn Sa‘d in the fifth generation (*ṭabaqa*) of the Basrans, he may have passed away between 141 and 175/758 and 782; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 273–86. For his reputation, see §II below .

<sup>54</sup> Despite the patronym, Shaybān b. Abī Shayba was not related to the Banū Abī Shayba in Kufa. Later sources give his *nisba* (attributive) as al-Ubullī, from al-Ubulla, a town in the vicinity of Basra; al-Sam‘ānī, *al-Ansāb* (Hyderabad: Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, 1977), 1: 98; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 12: 598. However, the early sources give his *nisba* as al-Aylī; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 8: 315; al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, 4: 254; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 4: 357; al-Fasawī, *al-Ma‘rifā*, 1: 211. Whether Shaybān b. Abī Shayba resided in al-Ubulla or not, he did narrate from several Basran scholars; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 12: 598–99.

Ḥār 959 seems to present an anomaly to the paradigm established here. Although transmitted by Basrans,<sup>55</sup> the hadith reads: “We, the Companions of the Messenger of God, being many, said, ‘The best of this community after its Prophet is Abū Bakr, then ‘Umar, and then ‘Uthmān,’ and then we fell silent.” The tenor of this hadith aligns with that of the non-Iraqi transmission, with its emphasis on the merits of the first three caliphs at the expense of other Companions. However, the two Basran transmitters, ‘Umar b. ‘Ubayd al-Khazzāz and Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Muqri’, actually moved to Mecca. Thus, to a certain extent, the text reflects this geographical transition, displaying the traits of the non-Iraqi version.

To recapitulate the analyses of the three bundles and the dives, first, the hadith derived from the later points of convergence (the third or fourth generation after Ibn ‘Umar or Abū Hurayra) display a close resemblance in terms of wording, turn of phrases, and syntax, but such affinity is not necessarily shared by those claiming to have descended from the same ancestors in the generations of the Companions and the Followers, as in the case of IA ‘Āṣim 1197 and Ḥār 959, both giving Abū Hurayra as their earliest narrator. Their distinctive features can only be traced back to the transmitters active in the mid- or late eighth century, as the contents of the hadith of Ibn ‘Umar (or Abū Hurayra) originating from the same bundle display substantial differences. For instance, those transmitted on the authority of Abū Ṣāliḥ do not present as a

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<sup>55</sup> I cannot find the death date of ‘Umar b. ‘Ubayd al-Khazzāz, but a reference given by al-‘Uqaylī notes that he transmitted a hadith in 179/795f.; al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, 6: 177–78; al-‘Uqaylī, *Kitāb al-Ḍu‘afā’*, ed. Ḥ. ‘A. Ismā‘īl (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumay‘ī, 2000), 920–21. Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Muqri’ was originally from Basra and later settled in Mecca where he died; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 8: 62; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 5: 201.

semantically akin family because the tradition narrated by Ismāʿīl b. ʿAyyāsh (IAʿĀṣim 1196) differs considerably from those by Abū Muʿāwiya (AH 58, IAShayba 32534, IAʿĀṣim 1195, AY 5784), not only in wording but also in tenor. However, it is possible to identify common characteristics among the hadith that are passed down from Abū Muʿāwiya, including AH 401 from Nāfiʿʿs bundle, given the resemblance in the word choice, manner of speech, and emphasis. Likewise, the wording of AH 857 (in Sālimʿs bundle) is almost the same as that of IAʿĀṣim 1193 (in Nāfiʿʿs bundle). The similarity in their wording is greater than that between AH 857 and IAʿĀṣim 1190, which, being from the same bundle, overlap greatly in their chains. Also, the wording of IAʿĀṣim 1193 is nearly identical to that of IAʿĀṣim 1196 (in Abū Ṣāliḥʿs bundle). Given their circulation by the transmitters of Homs, IAʿĀṣim 1193 and IAʿĀṣim 1196 may be considered as the cityʿs version of Ibn ʿUmarʿs hadith, based on their diction.

Second, a remarkable trend can be noted with regard to the chains in the later layers of transmission, that is, from the period covering the late eighth and early ninth centuries (whose transmitters died between the 770s and 820s). The contents of Ibn ʿUmarʿs hadith as transmitted by Syrians, Egyptians, and Hijazis tend to highlight the superiority of the first three caliphs *over* the rest of the Companions, including ʿAlī, with unequivocal phrases such as “the best of this community”; “we deemed superior”; and “we considered better or best.” In contrast, the version circulated by the Iraqis appears more ambiguous because of its use of *ʿadda* (to count, to enumerate) or *qāla* (to say) without overtly underscoring the excellence of the first three caliphs at the expense of their fellow Companions. Even the erratic narration, AH 392, which conspicuously differs from other Iraqi narrations, accentuates the superiority of the first three caliphs without stating that the rest are equally virtuous. The only exception to this is Ḥār 959, which can be explained by the relocation of the Basran transmitters to Mecca. With these

observations regarding the variations of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith in mind, below I will present the intellectual atmosphere of two major Iraqi cities, Basra and Kufa, to explain why the Iraqi transmitters favored this version of the hadith.

## II. THE IRAQI VERSION OF IBN ‘UMAR’S HADITH

In the previous section, I established that there are two versions of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith in circulation, one in Iraq and the other outside Iraq, in the eighth and ninth centuries. The Iraqi narrators disseminated the version that was more subtle about contrasting the first three caliphs with the rest of the Companions, while the non-Iraqis circulated the opposing one. Why did the Iraqis prefer the subtler version? A close look at the Iraqi chains shows that the Iraqi transmitters at the turn of the ninth century (death dates ranging from the 770s to 820s) were mainly based in Basra and Kufa.

Table 1. Basran and Kufan Transmitters of Ibn ‘Umar’s Hadith

The latitude of the Iraqi version, allowing for a flexible interpretation of the place of the Companions, especially ‘Alī, would likely have been welcomed in these two cities. In the eighth and ninth centuries, Kufa housed various Shi‘i groups, including Zaydis, Ghulāt, early Imamis, and mild Shi‘i traditionists,<sup>56</sup> in addition to important proto-Sunnis (including ‘Uthmānīs) that

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<sup>56</sup> For an overview of Kufan Shi‘is, see van Ess, *Theology and Society*, 1: 268–316; N. Haider, *The Origin of the Shi‘a: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Place in Eighth-Century Kūfa* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011), 3–21.



comprised members of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* and the *ahl al-raʿy*, both of which can be associated with one or more theological orientations (such as the Murjiʿa or Qadariyya).<sup>57</sup> Although less prominently Shiʿi,<sup>58</sup> Basra was no less diverse in sectarian and theological differences. Along with the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, different Kharijite groups were found in Basra, although their influence petered out after the start of the Abbasid caliphate.<sup>59</sup> An important element in Basra was Muʿtazilism.<sup>60</sup> To discuss in detail all the religious and theological views in these two cities is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is clear that such diversity indicates the existence of a broad array of views on the imamate and on the status of the first four caliphs. The Muʿtazilis alone provided divergent perspectives on the first four caliphs with regard to the question of whether or not the imamate should be assumed by the most virtuous man (*afḍal*) of the community (with its reflections on whether the best man after the Prophet was Abū Bakr or

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<sup>57</sup> Haider, *Origin of the Shīʿa*, 10; Ch. Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th–10th Centuries C.E.* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 32–38. There were also ʿUthmānīs in eighth-century Kufa, such as Sayf b. ʿUmar al-Tamīmī; Crone, ʿUthmāniyya.

<sup>58</sup> Various Shiʿi groups, especially the Ghulāt, resided in Basra during the early Abbasid period; Andersson, *Early Sunni Historiography*, 80.

<sup>59</sup> H.-L. Hagemann, “History and Memory: Khārijism in Early Islamic Historiography” (PhD diss., Univ. of Edinburgh, 2015), 256–61.

<sup>60</sup> *EI2*, art. Muʿtazila (D. Gimaret). For an overview of the intellectual and religious milieu of Basra, see Andersson, *Early Sunni Historiography*, 74–89. See also *EI2*, art. al-Baṣra (Ch. Pellat and S. H. Longrigg); *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, art. Basra (F. M. Donner); Ch. Pellat, *Le milieu basrien et la formation de Ḡāḥiẓ* (Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient, 1953).

‘Alī).<sup>61</sup> In light of an environment where ideological or intellectual differences were tangible and disputes could be easily triggered, the wording of the Iraqi version of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith would have been less contentious. Yet to generalize the attitude embraced by the *ahl al-ḥadīth* as simply irenic would be baseless and misleading, given the hadith collections’ inclusion of polemical traditions and the heterogeneity of this group. Close examination of the transmitters of the Iraqi version may help us better clarify its preponderance in the two cities.

The Basran transmission of the Iraqi version is somewhat tricky to contextualize, partly because most of its transmitters are either lesser known or poorly reputed. Al-Ḥasan b. Dīnār (AH 61) was accused of hadith forgery and Qadari belief.<sup>62</sup> His presence in this *isnād* is likely the reason why this narration is not widely accepted. His student, Shaybān b. Abī Shayba, also professed Qadarism, but he fared better among the *rijāl* critics.<sup>63</sup> Both al-Ḥārith b. ‘Umayr and al-‘Alā’ b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār (AH 55 and Tir 3707) are obscure, but their reliability in hadith transmission is more or less recognized.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, little is known of Qurra b. Khālīd (AH 392)

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<sup>61</sup> Pseudo-Nāshī’, *Masā’il*, 49–59. See also Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, 65–66.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Majrūhīn*, 1: 276–78; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 3: 11–12; al-‘Uqaylī, *al-Ḍu‘afā’*, 241–49; al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Ḍu‘afā’ al-ṣaghīr*, ed. M. I. Zāyid (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 1986), 33.

<sup>63</sup> Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 4: 357.

<sup>64</sup> Both were Basrans who settled in Mecca. For the former, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 3: 83–84; for the latter, Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 8: 63; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 6: 358. Al-Ḥārith’s reliability is debatable; al-‘Ijlī, *al-Thiqāt*, 103; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Majrūhīn*, 1: 266–67.

other than his Basran connection and credibility in hadith transmission.<sup>65</sup> More is known about ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī, a leading authority in hadith criticism.<sup>66</sup> Pseudo-Nāshi’ identifies him as one of the Basran *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* who professed the four-caliph thesis.<sup>67</sup> If ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī did indeed promote the four-caliph thesis, which is plausible given the *faḍā’il* hadith he spread,<sup>68</sup> then the Iraqi version could well justify his interpretation of the role of the first four caliphs and his propagation of ‘Alī as the fourth rightly guided one. Perhaps the same explanation for the Basran predilection for the Iraqi version can be extended to other transmitters, but it should be borne in mind that the other Basrans of the Iraqi version do not seem to have played as prominent a role in the dissemination of the *faḍā’il* hadith.<sup>69</sup> What can be

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<sup>65</sup> Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 7: 342; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 275.

<sup>66</sup> Scott C. Lucas, *Constructive Critics, Ḥadīth Literature, and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam: The Legacy of the Generation of Ibn Sa‘d, Ibn Ma‘īn, and Ibn Ḥanbal* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 71–72. He also traveled to Baghdad; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 11: 514–15.

<sup>67</sup> Pseudo-Nāshi’, *Masā’il*, 65–66.

<sup>68</sup> For his narrations on Abū Bakr’s merits: al-Nasā’ī, *Faḍā’il al-ṣaḥāba* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1984), 4; al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi‘*, 3667; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā’il*, 514, 548; on both Abū Bakr and ‘Umar’s merits: Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā’il*, 241, 422; on ‘Uthmān’s merits: Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, 205; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā’il*, 725, 777; on ‘Alī’s merits: Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, 203; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā’il*, 894; on the first three caliphs’ virtues: Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim, *al-Sunna*, 1136.

<sup>69</sup> The only other Basran known to have transmitted a *faḍā’il* tradition on Abū Bakr and ‘Umar is al-‘Alā’ b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā’il*, 877.

concluded here is that the Iraqi version presents a more insipid emphasis on the first three caliphs' virtues and thus would be less provocative in a social atmosphere as complex as that of Basra. Furthermore, it seems to have dovetailed with the Basran proto-Sunni perspective, at least as far as that of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī is concerned.

If explanatory strength in the case of Basra is undermined by the limits of the sources, the evolution of the Kufan Shi'is by the end of the eighth century, and in particular the biography of Abū Mu'āwiya, offer more insights into the city's socioreligious dynamics. The Kufan *ahl al-ḥadīth* practiced a mild form of Shi'ism, characterized by the belief in 'Alī's superiority to 'Uthmān.<sup>70</sup> 'Uthmān's caliphate was nonetheless recognized by some Shi'is, especially Batri Zaydis, whose leader, al-Ḥasan b. Ṣāliḥ b. Ḥayy (d. 167/783f.), considered the first six years of 'Uthmān's rule legitimate.<sup>71</sup> Thus, if a Kufan sought to promote 'Uthmān or absolve him of moral flaws, the Iraqi wording of Ibn 'Umar's hadith would have facilitated this without impugning 'Alī's merits. Then, upon the death of Ibn Ḥayy, the Batri hadith narrators gradually melted into the wider community of *ahl al-ḥadīth*,<sup>72</sup> which may have been propitious timing for the Murji'is to propagate their lenient interpretation of the role of the Companions and their conflicts. Although the Kufan Murji'is gradually dwindled after Abū Ḥanīfa's death in 150/767,<sup>73</sup> the hadith transmitter Abū Mu'āwiya (d. 195/810) may have been involved in incorporating the Kufan *ahl al-ḥadīth* into the proto-Sunni fold.

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<sup>70</sup> Pseudo-Nāshī', *Masā'il*, 65; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, 1: 270–74.

<sup>71</sup> Su, "Early Shi'i Kufan Traditionists' Perspective," 34–37.

<sup>72</sup> Haider, *Origin of the Shī'a*, 200–13; Su, "Early Shi'i Kufan Traditionists' Perspective," 34–39.

<sup>73</sup> Van Ess, *Theology and Society*, 1: 246.

The early biographical sources all associate Abū Mu‘āwiya with the Murji’a.<sup>74</sup> Al-‘Ijlī’s (d. ca. 261/874f.) remark that he was not radical in his Murji’i convictions (*kāna layyin al-qawl*) perhaps explains the overall positive reception of him by the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, who were hostile to the Murji’i doctrine of faith.<sup>75</sup> He is seen as an authority on the hadith of al-A‘mash, whom he had followed for twenty years, but less credible in his narrations from others.<sup>76</sup> Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn (d. 233/847) notes that Abū Mu‘āwiya’s narration of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith cannot be corroborated by others, indicating his inaccuracy when it comes to non-A‘mash traditions.<sup>77</sup> Although the practice of writing hadith down became the norm in Kufa during Abū Mu‘āwiya’s lifetime,<sup>78</sup> as a

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<sup>74</sup> Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 7: 441–42; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ma‘ārif*, ed. Th. ‘Ukāsha, 4th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, n.d.), 510; Ibn Muḥriz, *Ma‘rifat al-rijāl ‘an Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn*, ed. M. M. al-Ḥāfiẓ, Gh. Budayr, and M. K. al-Qaṣṣār, 2 vols. (Damascus: Maṭbū‘āt Majma‘ al-Lugha al-‘Arabiyya, 1985), 1: 158.

<sup>75</sup> Al-‘Ijlī, *al-Thiqāt*, 403.

<sup>76</sup> Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 7: 246–48; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 25: 129–31; Ibn Muḥriz, *Ma‘rifat al-rijāl*, 1: 157.

<sup>77</sup> Aḥmad M. N. Sayf, *Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn wa-kitābuhu al-Tārīkh: Dirāsa wa-tartīb wa-taḥqīq*, 4 vols. (Mecca: Markaz al-Baḥth al-‘Ilmī wa-Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1979), 2: 513.

<sup>78</sup> For the debate over writing down hadith, see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taqyīd al-‘ilm*, ed. M. b. ‘U. Bāzmūl (Cairo: Dār al-Istiḳāma, 2008), 13–14. And see Schoeler, *Oral and the Written*, 116; M. Cook, “The Opponents of the Writing of Tradition in Early Islam,” *Arabica* 44.4 (1997): 437–530, esp. 458–59.

blind person,<sup>79</sup> he most likely relied on oral transmission, which is more prone to altering. Likewise, it is not implausible that Abū Mu‘āwiya’s rephrasing of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith stems from his unfamiliarity with non-A‘mash hadith. However, his Murji’i conviction seems a valid motive for narrating Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith with this phrasing; he was associated with the court of al-Rashīd (r. 170–193/786–809), whom he is said to have persuaded to venerate ‘Alī.<sup>80</sup> The claims made on his activities at the Abbasid court can be buttressed by his transmission of the *faḍā’il* hadith on the first four caliphs. That such hadith narrated on Abū Mu‘āwiya’s authority outnumber those from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī and are widely found in different hadith compilations<sup>81</sup> perhaps indicate his efforts in promoting the first four caliphs and the Murji’i

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<sup>79</sup> Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 3: 135.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> On Abū Bakr’s virtues: Ibn Māja, *Sunan Ibn Māja*, ed. M. F. ‘Abd al-Bāqī, 2 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2003), 94; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 161, 164–65, 184; Ibn Abī ‘Āsim, *al-Sunna*, 1226, 1229; Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. M. F. ‘Abd al-Bāqī, 4 vols. (Cairo: ‘Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Shurakā’uh, 1955), 2383; al-Nasā’ī, *Faḍā’il al-ṣaḥāba*, 9; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 32521, 32525, 32537, 32562; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā’il*, 25, 26, 186, 226, 511, 587, 595, 600. On ‘Umar’s virtues: Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 32595, 32600–32603, 32605, 32606, 32620; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 255, 297; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā’il*, 47, 329. On those of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar: Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 32542, 32553; Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, 243; ‘Alī b. al-Ja‘d, *Musnad Ibn al-Ja‘d*, ed. ‘A. ‘A. ‘Abd al-Hādī (Kuwait: Maktabat al-Falāḥ, 1985), 2098; Ibn Abī ‘Āsim, *al-Sunna*, 1416; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā’il*, 110, 343, 397, 428, 487. On ‘Uthmān’s virtues: Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 32630, 32648–32649, 32661; Nu‘aym b.

view on the conflicts of the first Muslim generation, as illustrated by the following hadith he transmitted:

It reached ‘Alī that ‘Ā’isha cursed the murderers of ‘Uthmān at al-Mirbad. [The narrator, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya] said: He raised his hands to his face and said, “I curse the murderers of ‘Uthmān. May God curse them on the plains and the mountains.” He said that twice or thrice.<sup>82</sup>

Whether or not Abū Mu‘āwiya indeed deliberated on the wording of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith, it would have been possible for him to have appropriated the Iraḡi version, with its tacit acknowledgement of the first three caliphs, especially ‘Uthmān, without challenging ‘Alī’s standing, in order to endorse his Murjī’i views. In doing so, he may also have nudged the Kufan Shi‘i hadith scholars to align with the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* elsewhere over the question of the first four caliphs.

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Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, 442, 444, 434; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 59, 66, 77, 78; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 112; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā’il*, 47, 329. On ‘Alī’s virtues: Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 32662–32663, 32666–32667, 32676; al-Nasā’i, *Faḍā’il al-ṣaḥāba*, 41, 50; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 114; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 37; Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim, *al-Sunna*, 1325, 1354, 1380; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā’il*, 883, 900, 901, 1107, 1142, 1198, 1199, 1208. Finally, on the three caliphs’ virtues: Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 32534; Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, 265, 266, 297, 298; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 1195.

<sup>82</sup> Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā’il*, 733.

To situate the above analysis of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith in the current scholarly narrative regarding the formation of the four-caliph thesis, the geographical spread of the non-Iraqi version of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith (Hijaz, Syria, and Egypt) implies that the three-caliph thesis may indeed have been predominant before the mid-eighth century. The hadith attributed to Safīna that endorses the four-caliph thesis was first disseminated by Basrans and then by Iraqis (specifically Wasitis and Kufans).<sup>83</sup> While the two ideas may have been concurrent in different locales, given the Iraqi provenance of Safīna’s hadith and in light of how and by whom the Iraqi version of Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith was circulated in Basra and Kufa in the eighth century, Crone’s proposition that the four-caliph thesis first emerged in Iraq seems tenable. The analysis also supports Muhammad Qasim Zaman’s view that the inclination toward the four-caliph thesis was already present a generation before Ibn Ḥanbal, *pace* Madelung’s imputation, likely propagated by certain Kufans and Basrans, such as Abū Mu‘āwiya and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī. Furthermore, a Murji’i contribution to the formation of this proto-Sunni doctrine could be demonstrated through the case of Abū Mu‘āwiya.<sup>84</sup> The below section will explain why the three-caliph thesis, despite its initially wide diffusion across Muslim cities, lost standing to the four-caliph thesis.

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<sup>83</sup> See n. 6 above.

<sup>84</sup> Asma Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008), 56–57; Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 19.



### III. 'UTHMĀNĪ HADITH SCHOLARS IN THE EIGHTH AND NINTH CENTURIES

As transmitters of Ibn 'Umar's hadith, neither 'Abd al-Raḥmān and Ibn Mu'āwiya can be regarded as 'Uthmānīs,<sup>85</sup> and so it is necessary to identify the 'Uthmānīs among its transmitters. My approach to determining 'Uthmānī partisanship is to examine a transmitter's involvement in the transmission of *faḍā'il* traditions. If a transmitter only spread the merits of the first three caliphs to 'Alī's exclusion, then it is likely that the narrator in question was an 'Uthmānī. Conversely, if a transmitter narrated *faḍā'il* material on 'Alī, then the probability of his being an 'Uthmānī is diminished. A database of *faḍā'il* hadith on the first four caliphs, collated from nineteen hadith compilations was used to investigate forty-seven transmitters of Ibn 'Umar's hadith, listed in Figs. 1–3, whose death years are placed after the 770s. Admittedly, this approach cannot establish 'Uthmānī affiliation or partisanship with absolute certainty, since one does not have to narrate any hadith on 'Alī's virtues to be his partisan or advocate his legitimacy as the fourth rightly guided caliph. Yet this approach can at least clarify how the carriers of Ibn 'Umar's hadith, which endorses the three-caliph thesis, with the capacity to substantiate this notion through the narration of the *faḍā'il* accounts on the first three caliphs *only*, failed to perpetuate their view vis-à-vis their Iraqi counterparts.

Based on this approach, the following results are generated and shown in Table 2: out of forty-seven transmitters, thirteen are not known to have narrated any *faḍā'il* hadith other than Ibn 'Umar's hadith; twenty narrate the hadith that extol 'Alī's virtues or acknowledge his legitimacy;

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<sup>85</sup> Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī in AD 4628 is another case in point. While narrating the non-Iraqi version of Ibn 'Umar's hadith, he also transmitted a hadith elevating 'Alī's status; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 5: 319–20.

and fourteen can be considered ‘Uthmānī. These ‘Uthmānīs are listed below arranged by their geographical affiliations, as based on their final settlements, if known, or their *nisba*. The fourth column gives the total number of the *faḍā’il* traditions narrated, including Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith, and the final column the numbers of the narrator’s teachers and students as recorded in al-Mizzī’s (d. 742/1341) *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*.<sup>86</sup> When no information was found in this work, an *x* is placed.

Table 2. The ‘Uthmānī Transmitters of Ibn ‘Umar’s Hadith

The region that housed most ‘Uthmānī transmitters, unsurprisingly, was Syria, specifically Homs and Damascus. Yaḥyā b. Ḥassān,<sup>87</sup> ‘Umar b. ‘Ubayd, Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Muqri’, Salama b. Shabīb, and Mu‘āwiya b. Ḥafṣ<sup>88</sup> relocated to other regions. Another three

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<sup>86</sup> Despite its late date, al-Mizzī’s *Tahdhīb* is a useful source to assess a transmitter’s social connections, as his lists of a biographee’s teachers and students mentioned in the Six Books are near comprehensive.

<sup>87</sup> Yaḥyā b. Ḥassān’s origin is unclear. Al-‘Ijlī alone calls him *Kūfī* (*al-Thiqāt*, 470). Ibn Ḥibbān (*al-Thiqāt*, 9: 252) specifies a Damascene origin and residence in Tinnis, Egypt. Al-Mizzī (*Tahdhīb*, 31: 266) calls him *Basrī*, but this may have been a scribal error for *Miṣrī*.

Nevertheless, Yaḥyā b. Ḥassān did narrate from many Basrans.

<sup>88</sup> For ‘Umar b. ‘Ubayd, Mu‘āwiya b. Ḥafṣ, and Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Muqri’, see n. 56 and see §II above. ~~Salama b. Shabīb, originally from Nishapur, settled in Mecca; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 8: 287.~~

seem to have traveled widely in pursuit of hadith: al-Layth b. Sa‘d traveled to Mecca in 113/731f. and to Baghdad in 161/777f., where he narrated from the Hijazis and Iraqis<sup>89</sup>; his credentials are also approved by Iraq’s leading hadith critics, Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Ma‘īn, and Ibn al-Madīnī (161–234/778–849).<sup>90</sup> Salama b. Shabīb was originally from Khurasan but traveled to Isfahan, Damascus, Homs, Yemen, Hijaz, Iraq, Raqqa, and Egypt before settling in Mecca, where he became the reader (*mustamlī*) of Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Muqri’.<sup>91</sup> The third, Baqiyya b. al-Walīd, based in Homs, once visited Baghdad.<sup>92</sup> The two Baghdadis, Muḥammad b. Miskīn and Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Rifā‘ī, do not seem to have traveled beyond Iraq.<sup>93</sup> ‘Amr b. ‘Uthmān and Bishr b. Shu‘ayb seem to have led a stationary lifestyle.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, more than half of the

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<sup>89</sup> Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 24: 265–66.

<sup>90</sup> Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 7: 179; al-‘Ijlī, *al-Thiqāt*, 399; Sayf, *Yahyā b. Ma‘īn*, 2: 501.

<sup>91</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 1885; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 11: 286; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 80 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995–2001), 22: 76.

<sup>92</sup> Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 474; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 7: 623.

<sup>93</sup> Muḥammad b. Miskīn, originally from the Yamama, was once in Basra; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 4: 483–84; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 26: 401; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 9: 118. His dates are taken from al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-l-a‘lām*, ed. B. ‘A. Ma‘rūf, 18 vols.

(Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2003–4), 5: 1245–46. Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Rifā‘ī was Kufan by origin and later became the *qāḍī* of Ctesiphon before his demise in Baghdad; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 9: 109; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 4: 595.

<sup>94</sup> For ‘Amr b. ‘Uthmān, see Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 6: 249; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 8: 488. For Bishr, see Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 8: 141.

‘Uthmānī transmitters traveled between the eastern and western provinces. In theory, they could have spread the three-caliph thesis far and wide, but this is not the case.

Most of the ‘Uthmānī hadith transmitters studied here were not very well established in the *ahl al-ḥadīth* community because their reliability as transmitters was questioned or because they were relatively isolated. ‘Umar b. ‘Ubayd was a weak transmitter,<sup>95</sup> and Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Rifā‘ī’s reliability was subject to debate.<sup>96</sup> Although faring better, Baqiyya b. al-Walīd’s reliability was vitiated by his transmission from weak sources.<sup>97</sup> Little is known about Abū Bakr b. Abī Uways, Mu‘āwiya b. Ḥafṣ, and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥimsī.<sup>98</sup> The lack of biographical information suggests that they were marginalized or excluded from the *ahl al-ḥadīth* community or that their hadith were not sought after. This is also reflected in the lack of mention of teachers and students. The statistics show that, except for al-Layth b. Sa‘d, Baqiyya b. al-Walīd, and Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Muqri’, whose many contacts can compete with those

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<sup>95</sup> Ibn ‘Adī (d. 365/976) only knows two traditions on his authority (*al-Kāmil*, 6: 124–25). It is worth noting that Ibn ‘Adī also questions the authenticity of Ḥār 959 because of its attribution to Abū Hurayra instead of Ibn ‘Umar.

<sup>96</sup> Ibn Ma‘īn and al-‘Ijlī opine that he is acceptable, but other critics, including al-Bukhārī, consider him weak; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 8: 578; al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-ṣaghīr*, ed. M. I. Zāyid, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 1986), 2: 357; al-‘Ijlī, *al-Thiqāt*, 416; Ibn Muḥriz, *Ma‘rifat al-rijāl*, 1: 90.

<sup>97</sup> Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 2: 435; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 9: 474.

<sup>98</sup> It is not clear whether Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s biography on Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥimṣī (*al-Jarḥ*, 2: 72) refers to the subject here.

of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī (83/71) and Abū Mu‘āwiya (48/82),<sup>99</sup> what we know about the rest suggests that they were not well connected to other hadith transmitters, as the numbers of their students or teachers together do not surpass eighty.

It can be argued that the number of a transmitter’s teachers and students does not necessarily indicate his importance. For example, Bishr b. Shu‘ayb’s sole and only source is his father, Shu‘ayb b. Abī Ḥamza. However, as the father’s transmission from al-Zuhrī was sought after for its accuracy but not easily available because he was only willing to share his narrations shortly before his death, Bishr b. Shu‘ayb, as the inheritor of his father’s hadith notebooks, was an indispensable link between Shu‘ayb b. Abī Ḥamza and later generations.<sup>100</sup>

That said, the above observations concerning the ‘Uthmānīs’ networks can be further supported by the numbers of *faḍā’il* hadith they transmitted, which are indicative not only of their importance in the domain of the *faḍā’il* literature but also of their connections with other hadith scholars. The quantity of *faḍā’il* traditions passed down by these ‘Uthmānī narrators is not very impressive. ‘Amr b. ‘Uthmān, who transmitted fourteen *faḍā’il* traditions, does not seem to have traveled. Thus, his endorsement of the three-caliph thesis may have been limited to his city, Homs, or at most its environs. The same can be said of Sulaymān b. Bilāl, who was based in Medina.<sup>101</sup> Al-Layth b. Sa‘d, second in the quantity of *faḍā’il* hadith on the first three caliphs, did travel extensively. To a certain extent, his influence in Egypt in terms of the dissemination of

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<sup>99</sup> Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 17: 431–35, 25: 124–28 respectively.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 4: 128; on Shu‘ayb b. Abī Ḥamza, ibid., 12: 518–19.

<sup>101</sup> Sulaymān b. Bilāl was a Medinan in charge of the city’s taxes (*kharāj*); Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7: 598; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 6: 388.

the three-caliph concept is well noted.<sup>102</sup> However, as a whole, the numbers recorded here probably imply a very limited impact exerted upon the community of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, compared with the propagator of the four-caliph thesis, Abū Mu‘āwiya, on whose authority eighty-four *faḍā’il* hadith were narrated.

In short, judging from the available biographical information on these transmitters, it can be suggested that with the exception of al-Layth b. Sa‘d, Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Muqri’, and Baqiyya b. al-Walīd, the ‘Uthmānī transmitters failed to build up a network of contacts in the nascent Sunni community that was widespread enough to sustain their views on the history of the early Muslim community—probably for a number of reasons, such as the choice of staying in their home cities instead of journeying to collect and spread hadith elsewhere, the dubious reliability of some of them (e.g., ‘Umar b. ‘Ubayd and al-Rifā‘ī), or the decision to relocate to Mecca, which, despite its status as the holy city of Islam and site of pilgrimage, declined in the Muslim intellectual world from the ninth century onward.<sup>103</sup> The ‘Uthmānī transmitters’ limited impact is also reflected in the low number of *faḍā’il* traditions on the first three caliphs recorded

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<sup>102</sup> The biographical sources also claim that al-Layth b. Sa‘d spread *faḍā’il* traditions on ‘Uthmān to inspire Egyptians to love the third caliph. Crone (‘Uthmāniyya) argues that this claim cannot be historically accurate, since “the ‘Uthmānism preponderated elsewhere in the early Umayyad period.” The data discussed here, however, suggest that al-Layth b. Sa‘d did contribute to the cultivation of a positive image of ‘Uthmān. See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 24: 271; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 14: 529.

<sup>103</sup> R. W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantative History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979), 8.

by later hadith scholars: the total of eighty is less than the *faḍā'il* traditions narrated on Abū Mu'āwiya's authority alone.

#### CONCLUSION

This article has examined the transmission and transmitters of a hadith attributed to Ibn 'Umar or Abū Hurayra. This hadith was often mentioned in support of the three-caliph thesis in proto-Sunni discourse. The analysis focused on the transmitters active between the mid-eighth and mid-ninth centuries in order to better understand the historical transformation of the early *ahl al-ḥadīth*, who gradually came to accept the notion that the first four caliphs were rightly guided and the embodiment of ideal Muslim leadership. The examination of the spread of Ibn 'Umar's hadith in the period concerned shows a notable difference in the word choice, tenor, and emphasis between the Iraqi and non-Iraqi narrations. The former does not provide exclusive praise of the first three caliphs, while the latter accentuates their superiority to other Companions, including 'Alī. The Iraqi transmitters, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī and Abū Mu'āwiya, may have been the proponents of the four-caliph thesis, to which the flexible content of the Iraqi version of Ibn 'Umar's hadith was well suited. This study agrees with and further substantiates the current view that the three-caliph thesis was the majority belief before being replaced by the four-caliph thesis, which was a product of Iraq. A Murjī'i contribution to this process was also demonstrated here through the case of Abū Mu'āwiya.

In order to explain the decline of the three-caliph thesis, this paper investigated the 'Uthmānī narrators of Ibn 'Umar's hadith. The 'Uthmānīs were identified through their transmission of *faḍā'il* hadith on the first three caliphs only. Although the 'Uthmānī narrators traveled in pursuit of hadith or relocated to other regions, suggesting the potential dissemination

of their perspective on the first three caliphs, most of them did not manage to secure a great following in the subsequent generation, as reflected in the low number of their students and the total number of *faḍā'il* hadith recorded on their authority. There are multiple reasons for this failure: their poor reputations as hadith transmitters, a stationary lifestyle, their decision to relocate to a less intellectually vibrant city, or a combination thereof. Whatever the case, they failed to build up a sustainable and expansive network that would have helped to perpetuate the three-caliph thesis.

While this paper offered some insights into the transformation of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* with regard to their attitudes toward the first four caliphs, there are aspects that remain to be explored to better our understanding of the emergence of the four-caliph thesis. As noted in the introduction, other traditions that endorse the three-caliph thesis need to be studied in order to buttress the conclusion based on Ibn 'Umar's hadith. In addition, analysis of the hadith on the *faḍā'il* of other Companions—*par excellence*, that on the ten Companions in heaven (*al-ʿashara fī al-janna*)—and the conception of the mutual probity of the Companions (*ʿadālat al-ṣaḥāba*) is likely to illuminate the dynamics within the early Sunni community and thus help situate their consensus over the first four caliphs in the wider intellectual discourse.<sup>104</sup> Another relevant facet worth further investigation concerns the formation of the Sunni devotion to the *ahl al-bayt*,

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<sup>104</sup> See the relevant discussion in F. Jabali, *The Companions of the Prophet: A Study of Geographical Distribution of Political Alignments* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 41–83; Lucas, *Constructive Critics*, 237–85; Amr Osman, “‘Adālat al-Ṣaḥāba: The Construction of a Religious Doctrine,” *Arabica* 60 (2013): 272–305.



specifically, the ‘Alids.<sup>105</sup> The early Sunni reverence for ‘Alī likely resulted from their interaction with different theological articulations, especially those by Zaydis, Mu‘tazilis, and Murji’is, which produced much polemical discourse that promotes ‘Alī’s superiority.<sup>106</sup> This took place in the complex milieu where different groups continuously evolved in reaction to intra- and inter-debates about the memory of the first Muslim community.

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<sup>105</sup> See the relevant discussion in M. Kazuo, “How to Behave toward Sayyids and Sharīfs: A Trans-Sectarian Tradition of Dream Accounts,” in *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet*, ed. M. Kazuo (London: Routledge, 2012); T. Bernheimer, *The ‘Alids : The First Family of Islam, 750–1200* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2013).

<sup>106</sup> Especially the Mu‘tazilis under al-Ma’mūn’s (r. 198–218/813–833) patronage; Husayn, “Rehabilitation of ‘Alī,” 581–83.